providing a database containing a second set of digital data, said database accessible by said plurality of remote sites via said bi-directional channel;

said first set of digital data comprising a set of displayable data and at least one linkage reference associated with said set of displayable data, said set of displayable data transferable to said nonvolatile memory and displayable on said display device, said linkage reference transferable to said nonvolatile memory but not displayable on said display device, said linkage reference being transmitted to said database base via said bi-directional channel when said set of displayable data is selected by a user;

said database comprising means for accepting said linkage reference originated from at least one of said plurality of sites;

searching, by said database, for a portion of said second set of digital data referenced by said linkage reference; and

sending, by said database, said portion to said at least one site via said bi-directional channel.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein said first set of digital data is encrypted.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein said storage devices are CDROMs.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein said storage devices are optically encoded storage devices.

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21. The method of claim 17 wherein said set of displayable data comprises text-based characters.

22. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of periodically updating parts of said second set of digital data.

23. The method of claim 17 wherein said at least one linkage reference is enclosed between a pair of non-displayable symbols.

24. An information distribution system for distributing digital data via a bi-direction channel to a plurality of remote sites each having a processing device, a nonvolatile memory, and a display device, comprising:

a plurality of portable read-only storage devices each encoded with a first set of digital data, said storage devices being distributed to said plurality of remote sites;

a database containing a second set of digital data and means for remotely communicating with said sites using said bi-directional channel;

said first set of digital data comprising a set of displayable data and at least one linkage reference associated with said set of displayable data, said set of displayable data transferable to said nonvolatile memory and displayable on said display device, said linkage reference transferable to said nonvolatile memory but not displayable on said display device, said linkage reference being transmitted to said database base via said bi-directional channel when said set of displayable data is selected by a user;

said means for communicating comprising means for accepting said at least one linkage reference delivered by at least one of said plurality of sites; and

means in said database for searching for a portion of said second set of digital data referenced by said at least one linkage reference and for sending said portion to said at least one site via said bi-directional channel.

25. The system of claim 24 wherein said storage devices are CDROMs.

26. The system of claim 24 wherein said read-only storage devices are optically encoded storage devices.

27. The system of claim 24 wherein said set of displayable data comprises text-based characters.

28. The system of claim 24 further comprising means for periodically updating parts of said second set of digital data.

29. The system of claim 24 wherein said at least one linkage reference is enclosed between a pair of non-displayable symbols.

30. The system of claim 24 wherein said first set of digital data is encrypted.--

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